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ABSTRACT

Students have needs for counseling assistance in the areas of understanding themselves, relating to others, getting through school, and planning for college or work. Guidance programs often react to student problems rather than prevent them. California Senate Bill 813 provided $20 per tenth grade student to assure that each student would receive a review of academic progress and counseling related to educational options in the hope that students would be better prepared for the next step after high school. Typically, each student and his or her parent had 30 minutes of counseling. Counseling priority was given to students at risk of dropping out. Students with college potential but who were not college bound were often identified and were in need of concerted guidance efforts. Although tenth grade is a valid check point to find out who will graduate and who will not, dropout-prone youth could be identified as early as sixth grade. Counseling measures need to be reinforced to maximize student potential. Schools did an admirable job of seeing the majority of students and available parents. Follow-up interviews of students may yield data supporting the effectiveness of the program. (Appendices include a statistical report on a survey of the results of the counseling services provided by SB 813 and the text of the bill itself.) (ABL)

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SB 813 and Tenth Grade Counseling: A Report on Implementation

Carole L. Swain

May 1985

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SB 813 and Tenth Grade Counseling: A Report on Implementation

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May 1985

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many students continue to be in need of guidance, and students themselves have expressed a desire for assistance. Comprehensive school guidance programs attempt to address a range of student needs on personal, social, career, and academic dimensions. Many guidance and counseling programs, however, have suffered cutbacks in recent years.

SB 813 provided $20 per tenth grade student for academic counseling. This portion of the legislation was included as a checkpoint for assessing students' progress toward graduation and broadening their educational and career options. This counseling program is intended to strengthen existing comprehensive guidance programs. It gives priority to students not progressing satisfactorily toward graduation and students with college potential who are not college bound. Almost all high schools applied for and received these funds.

The major impact of the SB 813 counseling program is that targeted students receive more individual attention, and existing counseling services are strengthened. The novel activity resulting from this program is the large number of parent-counselor contacts. There is no way of knowing yet the impact of these services on students' progress in school. Follow-up support was generally absent because the $20 was inadequate to fund these activities also. In addition, the counselor-student ratio did not change. Expenditures under this program largely purchased services for students rather than purchasing personnel, computers, or the like for school districts.

The tenth grade is a valid checkpoint, but many potential dropouts can be spotted as early as the sixth grade. The changes needed for all at-risk students require earlier targeting and conscientious follow-up. SB 813 allows school districts to target students sooner than the tenth grade, though there is no evidence of this happening yet.

There is no question that this program enables counselors to contact all students, and parents are being drawn into the counseling process. This is a positive step, but these measures must be reinforced in order to maximize their impact and potential. Without follow-up, students' vision of possibilities fades. The school districts did an admirable job of seeing students and parents. It is possible that this contact redirected these students at risk. Follow-up studies with students may support a promising outlook on this program's effectiveness.

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POLICY ANALYSIS FOR CALIFORNIA EDUCATION

Policy Analysis for California Education, PACE, is a university-based research center focusing on issues of state education policy and practice. PACE is located in the Schools of Education at the University of California, Berkeley and Stanford University. It is funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and directed jointly by James W. Guthrie and Michael W. Kirst.

PACE efforts center on four tasks: (1) collecting and distributing objective information about the conditions of education in California, (2) analyzing state education policy issues and the policy environment, (3) evaluating school reform implementation efforts and state education practices, and (4) facilitating communication among policymakers, researchers, and others.

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SB 813 AND TENTH GRADE COUNSELING

Many students continue to be in need of guidance. High truancy and drop out rates, student drug abuse, conflict and violence in schools, and low academic achievement are all evidence of this need.[1] Comprehensive guidance programs attempt to address a range of student needs on personal, social, career, and academic dimensions. Students themselves have expressed a desire for such assistance, particularly in four areas: (1) understanding themselves and relating to others, (2) getting through school, (3) planning for higher education, and (4) planning for work.[2]

Many guidance programs, however, "are often oriented toward reacting to student problems rather than preventing them, and services are not integrated into the total educational system."[3] Reasons for this are often beyond the counselors' control. Many school guidance and counseling programs have suffered significant cutbacks during the last few years, including a decrease in their ability to counsel students individually.

Senate Bill 813, the Hughes-Hart Educational Reform Act of 1983, provided $20 per tenth grade student for academic counseling.[4] This portion of the legislation was included as a checkpoint for assessing students' progress toward graduation and broadening their educational and career options.[5] School districts were encouraged "to consider these funds as an opportunity to strengthen the academic portion of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program for students."[6]

What Is SB 813 Counseling?

"Sections 84 and 85 of SB 813 set aside funds to assure that every student, upon reaching age 16 or prior to the end of the tenth grade, will receive a review of academic progress and counseling related to educational options. By providing for this checkpoint on student progress, it is hoped that students will be better prepared for their next step after high school, whether it be further education or a job.[7]

The SB 813 counseling program gives priority to identifying and counseling those students who are not progressing satisfactorily toward graduation and those who have the ability to achieve higher goals, such as college, but are not in a college preparatory sequence.[8] All but 14 of California's 845 high schools applied for and received these counseling funds during the 1983-84 school year. The Legislature earmarked $6,168,303 for this purpose.

What Did the Twenty Dollars Buy?

This study shows that the money was used to identify students and to interview them and their parents. Beyond these interviews, sustained support for the students and their families was noticeably absent. The SB 813 counseling money was adequate to fund only the identification of students--targeted students particularly--and the subsequent interviews.

Typically, the twenty dollars bought thirty minutes of counseling for each tenth grade pupil and his or her parents, individual counseling that generally would not have occurred otherwise. Ninety-one percent of school district survey respondents reported providing systematic reviews of all tenth graders' academic progress. In addition, counseling services such as individual counseling, conferences with parents, career work, educational information distribution, emphasis on "at risk" groups, and the like were increased. The ratio of students to counselors, however, did not change, although most districts reported hiring a part-time counselor with their funds.

The major impact of the SB 813 counseling program, it seems, is that targeted students receive more individual attention and existing services are strengthened. The novel activity resulting from this program seems to be the large number of parent-counselor contacts. Public and professional response to this approach has been enthusiastic.

In his study of Stanford and the schools, Professor Michael Kirst confirms that tenth grade is a make-it-or-break-it point for many students. The following account of how high schools have implemented the SB 813 counseling program describes services provided as a result of the legislation. There is no way of knowing as yet the impact of these services on individual student's progress in school.

WHAT IS BEING DONE?

Services

Administrators or counselors in 412 high schools, approximately half the high schools in California, responded to an inquiry about their counseling programs for tenth graders. (The full range of responses is included in Appendix A.) As a result of the SB 813 counseling program, most schools provided students with individual or group counseling sessions, which often included their parents, in a review of both educational and career opportunities as well

as individual student profiles. These profiles include academic records, ability scores, and interest survey results. Computers were the tool of choice in assisting school district counselors and others in both locating students at risk and in providing career and educational guidelines to students.

SB 813 counseling expenditures reported by school districts correspond neatly to services provided. In other words, the SB 813 counseling money largely purchased services for students rather than purchasing personnel, computers, and the like for the school districts. Interestingly, those programs historically regarded as "promising practices" by school districts, such as peer counseling, development of career centers, and involvement of community, business, and advisory committees,[9] were supported by less than ten percent of the available funds. Many of these more innovative ideas amount to follow-up efforts, activities that are conspicuously lacking in school districts' planning and implementation of the SB 813 counseling program.

Recent California task forces call for institutionalization of guidance services by introducing teachers and course work into the process.[10] Counseling plans developed by the schools in response to SB 813, though well executed, did not reflect this mandate. Here, similar to the lack of follow-up, opportunity for intervention is not fully realized.

Target Students

Though systematic reviews of all students were con ducted and parents were invited to participate, the actual targeting of potential dropouts relied on the somewhat abbreviated set of criteria of units completed, courses failed, and attendance. The more subjective criteria of social isolation, lack of parent support, and alienation from school activities were rarely considered. The same generalization can be made about targeting the other high-risk population, that is, those students with college potential who are not enrolled in a college preparatory sequence.

Which students actually received priority? First on the list are those at risk of not graduating. Not only did they receive more counseling time but more of their parents attended counseling sessions. Serving the rest of the tenth grade population took priority over attending to the other group of students targeted by the program, that is, those who have college potential but are not college bound. These students with unidentified college potential are often floating in the general curriculum track. According to

Mike Garet, who analyzed student transcripts in several high schools, the students in the middle or general track frequently take a chaotic and often nonsequential program.[11] Consequently, these students with college potential, who most need concerted guidance efforts to select the appropriate high school program, are receiving the least assistance.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The tenth grade is a valid checkpoint to find out who is going to stay to graduate and who is not, but if maximizing human potential is the underlying motive for this legislation, it comes too late. In Push Out, Step Out, a report on California's public school dropouts, the author states that "once a youth reaches age sixteen and has verbalized the intention to drop out, built on years of painful and difficult school experience, it is almost impossible to dissuade that student . . . Research literature on dropouts agrees that many dropout-prone youth can be identified as early as the end of sixth grade."[12]

The changes needed for all at-risk students, such as modifying their academic programs, fostering study skills, and continuing support for their new lifestyles, require earlier targeting and conscientious follow-up.

There is no question that SB 813 enables counselors to make contact with all students and that many parents are being drawn into the counseling process. This is a positive first step. But these measures must be reinforced in order to maximize their impact and potential. Unless the seeds of their interest and hope are nurtured by continuing support, the students' sense of new possibilities fades once they return to their peer groups, homes, and school routines. With a counselor-pupil ratio of 1:400 (a constant figure for the four years before SB 813, as well as the year of SB 813), such careful monitoring is unlikely.

In all fairness, the schools received funding for tenth grade counseling late in the year (in February and March 1984). Many assumed that all efforts should be focused on the tenth grade student. SB 813 permits earlier counseling as long as it occurs before the end of tenth grade, thus enabling school districts to distribute funds to junior high and elementary schools. With this expanded interpretation, school districts could target students sooner, though there is no evidence of this yet occurring. Even with earlier identification, we are still faced with the challenge for development of innovative intervention programs.

The school districts did an admirable job of seeing the majority of students and available parents. It is possible that this human contact will result in the redirection of those students at risk. Follow-up interviews of representative students may yield further data supporting a promising outlook on the effectiveness of this program.

NOTES

1. California State Department of Education, Guidelines for Developing Comprehensive Guidance Programs in California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Adult School (Sacramento, CA: State Department of Education, 1981).

2. Citizens Policy Center, Lost in the Shuffle: A Report on the Guidance System in California Secondary Schools (Santa Barbara, CA: Citizens Policy Center, 1979).

3. California State Department of Education, Guidelines for Developing Comprehensive Guidance Programs in California Public Schools.

4. Actual reimbursement to school districts was $18.95 per tenth grade pupil.

5. California State Department of Education, Program Advisory Number CIL: 83/4-4 Regarding 10th Grade Counseling (Sacramento, CA: State Department of Education, October 20, 1983, revised November 29, 1983).

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. SB 813, Chapter 498 assigns priority to "pupils who are not earning credits at a rate which will enable them to graduate with the rest of their class." The California State Department of Education's interpretation of this counseling program states in part, "It is also expected that many students who have the ability to achieve higher goals and whose aspirations are too low will be actively encouraged to pursue a more rigorous program." Hence, the two target groups: potential dropouts and college-potential students who are not college bound.

9. Promising Practices (San Jose, CA: Reforming Guidance for the Future, conference notes, 1983).

10. Ad Hoc Task Force on California Counseling and Guidance, A California K-12 Counseling and Guidance Rationale and Goals Reform Statement (an unpublished position paper from representatives of CSCA, CASES, McDaniel Foundation, SDOE, and CPGA, 1984).

11. S. Dornbush, Study of Stanford and the Schools: Report to Counselors on Some of Our First Analyses (February 1984).

12. Citizens Policy Center, Push Out, Step Out: A Report on California's Public School Dropouts (Santa Barbara, CA.: Citizens Policy Center, 1982).

APPENDIX A

RESULTS OF THE PACE SB 813 COUNSELING SURVEY, SPRING 1984

Four hundred and twelve questionnaires were processed. Approximately half of the high schools in California are represented in the sample.

	Mean	Mode	Median
Estimated dropout rates*	13	10	10
Estimated graduation rates	85	90	90
Go to college	49	50	50

(*district reported)

Criteria for selection of students at risk of not graduating:

Percentage of schools using the criteria:

Units completed	91%
Course failures	84
Attendance	69
Counselor	44
Proficiency test	43
Age	37
Teacher	37
Grade point average	28
Self	25
Parent	23
Suspensions	17
Standardized tests	14
Ability tests	13
Course enrollments	13
Psychologists	10

Criteria for selection of students with college potential who are not college prep:

Percentage of schools using the criteria:

Grade point average	61%
Course enrollments	58
Counselor	56
Standardized achievement tests	55
Teacher	47
Ability test scores	38
Parents	37
Self	32
Proficiency tests	27
Psychologist	6

Ninety-one percent of the schools reported providing systematic reviews of all the 10th graders' academic progress.

Of the few who reported how many they found at risk, about equal numbers of at risk of not graduating were found as with college potential and not college prepared. Mean of about 60 and a median of 80 cases of both at risk of dropping out and not prepared for college were reported.

Systematic review was conducted by:

Counselors	95% of the time
Administrators	14
Technicians	14
Teachers	13

Type of assistance received:

Individual counseling	96%
Information packets	61
Group meetings	53
Tutoring	17

Educational options were made available by 85 percent of the programs.

The following personnel met with the 10th grade students:

Counselors	95%
Teachers	18
Technicians	18

Types of information shared with students:

High school course information	94%
Career information	91
College information	90
Achievement data	87
Interest data	77
Ability data	65
Financial aid	46

Guidance population served (number of districts reporting priorities):

	At risk of not graduating	All 10th	College potential not college prepared
1st priority	215	192	11
2nd priority	100	96	131
3rd priority	22	175	175

Parent involvement:

365 programs reported parent involvement
47 said no parent involvement

Parents who participated with the following guidance groups (percent who attended conferences):

	Mean	Mode	Median
At risk of not graduating	46%	5%	36%
Potential college prep.	40	10	25
College prep.	53	10	50
General 10th graders	39	10	30

Average number of minutes alloted for each individual:

	Mean	Mode	Median
High risk	59	30	37
College potential	44	30	30
General 10th graders	43	30	30
College prep.	43	30	30

Percentage of funds spent on the different populations

	Mean
General 10th graders	30%
High risk	30
College prep.	25
College potential	20

Funds by budget category:

	Mean	N of districts
PPS worker-counselor	60%	235
Academic guidance materials	20	170
Guidance technicians	15	49
Career technicians	10	64
Paraprofessional/sub teacher	12	39
Staff development	5	49
Psychologists	11	12

SB 813 counseling funds spent for the following activities:

	Median % of funds	N of districts
Individual counseling in school	40%	142
Computer hardware	35	107
Individual counseling in late afternoon/evening	30	161
Individual counseling in summer	20	43
Student advisement	20	67
Parent conferences	20	161
Computer software	15	129
Group counseling	11	77
Group guidance	11	91
Add curriculum unit	11	20
Interest and aptitude tests	10	149
Peer counseling	10	18
Career centers	8	102
Individual counseling (weekends)	6	30
Community business	6	19
Advisory committees	6	14
Addition of a course	6	20
Dissemination of materials	6	111
Follow-up	6	47
ROP counseling	5	47

New staffing resulting from SB 813:

	Yes	No
N = 127	99.2%	.8%

Restore old positions:

	Yes	No
N = 24	95.8%	4.2%

Most school districts restored less than one full-time position.

Ratio of counselors to students:

School year	Mean	Mode	Median
1978-79	1:370	1:400	1:375
1982-83	1:388	1:400	1:400
1983-84	1:405	1:400	1:400

Students who benefited most (selected counties):

	Number of schools reporting student benefits		
	Alameda	Contra Costa	LA
At risk	13	8	8
College potential but not college prepared	7	0	4
All	6	6	10

Problems in implementation of SB 813 (selected counties):

	Number of schools reporting problems		
	Alameda	Contra Costa	LA
Time to implement/ lateness of funds	10	7	12
Student scheduling	0	0	5
Scheduling of parents	2	0	3
Time taken away from other services	1	3	1
Time for conferences	4	0	0
Changed work load/heavier	2	0	1
Getting computer equipment	0	1	2

Activites changed because of SB 813 (selected counties):

	Number of districts reporting different types of activities		
	Alameda	Contra Costa	LA
More individual counseling (especially evenings)	11	5	12
Counseling/conferences with parents	9	6	9
Career work (center usage, units)	7	3	4
More educational information distribution	3	5	6
Emphasis on "at risk" group	2	5	1
Group work	4	0	0
Testing/interest surveys	4	0	3
Computer materials/ student records	1	3	4
Course	0	1	2
More staff	0	1	2

WISHES . . . Additions not able to add (selected counties):

	Number of districts reporting needed additions		
	Alameda	Contra Costa	LA
More time	6	2	3
Counselor(s)	1	4	5
Technicians/clerical/ administration	0	1	3
Computer hardware	4	4	0
Computer software	3	4	2
More career counseling	3	3	2
Group counseling (similar problems)	2	0	4
Follow up (tutorial, study skills, home visit, general interventions)	4	1	3
Field trips	1	0	2
More parent participation	0	0	3

APPENDIX B

SB 813 TENTH GRADE COUNSELING PROGRAM
CHAPTER 498, SECTIONS 84 AND 85

SEC. 84. Section 48431.6 is added to the Education Code, to read:

48431.6. The governing board of each district maintaining high schools and accepting funds made available for purposes of this section shall establish and maintain a program which ensures that each pupil, upon reaching the age of 16 or prior to the end of the 10th grade, whichever occurs first, has received a systematic review of his or her academic progress and counseling regarding the educational options available to the pupil during the final two years of high school. The program shall be adopted at a public meeting of the governing board, and shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

(a) Provision for individualized review of the pupil's academic and deportment records.

(b) Provision for a meeting with the pupil, and where feasible, with the pupil's parent or guardian, to explain the pupil's record, the educational options available to the pupil, the course work and academic progress needed for satisfactory completion of high school, and the effect of such course work and academic progress upon the pupil's options for postsecondary education and employment. Educational options shall include, but not be limited to, regional occupational centers and programs, continuation schools, academic programs, and any other alternatives available to pupils of the district.

(c) Provision for services of teachers, counselors, and others designated by the governing board to provide the individualized review and assistance to pupils pursuant to subdivisions (a) and (b). To the maximum extent feasible, regional occupational center and program counselors shall actively participate in, and the local business community shall be involved in, career guidance activities.

The program shall give first priority to identifying pupils who are not earning credits at a rate which will enable them to graduate with the rest of their class, and to providing these pupils with counseling services funded pursuant to Section 48431.7.

SEC. 85. Section 48431.7 is added to the Education Code, to read:

48431.7. Funds appropriated for purposes of Section 48431.6 shall supplement, and shall not supplant, existing funding for counseling services. Out of funds appropriated for those purposes, the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall apportion twenty dollars ($20) per prior year's enrollment in grade 10 to each school district which has adopted a program pursuant to Section 48431.6.